



## **Care farming: an innovative approach for promoting women's economic empowerment, decent rural employment and social inclusion. What works in developing countries?**

**Discussion No. 100 from 15 April to 6 May 2014**

### Background and references on care farming

Besides their important care function, kindergarten farms, or rural nurseries provide important educational services, in as much as they can shape future generations' food habit, food consumption and approach to farming. Children learn to appreciate and respect nature and agriculture; they learn about the healthy diet, the origin of the food and understand the link between agricultural products and food, re-evaluating the social function of the farmers. This is a crucial aspect of care farming which in this way is able to educate future consumers for sustainable production and consumption, indispensable to build sustainable food systems.

In the European context, care farming is an on-farm economic diversification strategy, and often initiated by a woman farmer in order to create her own employment (Dessein and Bock 2010). It can represent an alternative employment opportunity for those rural women who decide to provide these services and can enhance other rural women's access to economic activities by alleviating their time spent on unpaid care work. Providing essential care services in remote rural areas can also reduce outmigration and the depopulation process of the agricultural and rural areas.

Care farming offers disadvantaged people the possibility to participate in meaningful and productive activities, by appreciating and focusing on their potential and capabilities. Their activities have much in common with those of people in paid employment (i.e. daily routine, social interaction, skills development, opportunities, payment for their work, etc.). People with specific needs by being involved in a worthwhile activity develop a sense of identity and competence around being a gardener or farm worker and regain a feeling of purpose, self-esteem and dignity. Furthermore, actively engaging with the natural environment has a positive influence on their health and well-being.

**We envisage that the concept of care farming and its principles can be adapted to the developing countries context. In particular, we consider that care farming can be a possible way to alleviate rural women's time spent on unpaid care work and thus to represent a possible means for enhancing their economic empowerment.**

Women's disproportionate work burden related to unpaid care\* is one of the most important constraints preventing women from developing their full economic potential (IMF 2013, De Schutter 2013). Time-use surveys across a wide range of countries estimate that women provide 85-90 percent of the time spent on household food preparation, child care and other household chores (FAO 2011).

The World Development Report on Gender Equality and Development (World Bank 2012) provided evidence that access to child and elderly care is associated with increases in the number of hours worked and, in developing countries, participation in formal employment among female workers, suggesting that better access to formal child and elderly care affords women greater flexibility and potentially allows them to seek employment in the formal sector.

\* **Unpaid care work** refers to work that is outside the boundary of the System of National Accounts **and** includes all those activities that go towards caring for a household,

- the so-called domestic work, such as cooking, cleaning, collecting water and firewood, and direct care of persons, caring for the ill, older persons, disabled, children and other household members, when these activities are done by family members for no pay,
- unpaid care work also includes unpaid help to other households and community and voluntary work. (ActionAid 2013, UNGA 2013 b)

## References

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- UN General Assembly (2013 a). Outcome document of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the realization of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals for persons with disabilities: the way forward, a disability-inclusive development agenda towards 2015 and beyond, A/68/L.1.
- UN General Assembly (2013 b). Extreme poverty and human rights. Note by the Secretary-General. A/68/293.

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- World Bank (2012). Gender Equality and Development. World Development Report 2012.

#### **Other sources of relevant information:**

- Care farming: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Care\\_farming](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Care_farming)
- Farming for health: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/60146090/Farming-for-Health-Proceedings-of-the-Community-of-Practice-Farming-for-Health>
- Supporting policies for Social Farming in Europe:  
[http://sofar.unipi.it/index\\_file/arsia\\_So.Far-EU\\_def.pdf](http://sofar.unipi.it/index_file/arsia_So.Far-EU_def.pdf)